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Frances Falconer,

1799

THE  
RESURRECTION

OF  
OUR SAVIOUR

ASSERTED.

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*Francis Falconer*

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RESURRECTION

OF

OUR SAVIOUR,

ASSERTED FROM AN



EXAMINATION OF THE PROOFS

OF

THE IDENTITY OF HIS CHARACTER

AFTER THAT EVENT,

IN A

LETTER

TO THE

REVEREND *Light Richmond*

*of Thomas Falconer, M.A. of Corpus Christi Coll:*

BATH, PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL,

AND SOLD BY

C. DILLY, POULTRY, LONDON.

1798.



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THE

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OF

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ASSERTED FROM AN

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ACTED THAT EVENT

IN A

LETTER

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REVEREND L. R.

BATH, PRINTED BY R. CRUTWELL,

AND SOLD BY

G. DILLY, FOUNTAIN, LONDON.

1758.



MY DEAR FRIEND,

**T**HE advocates of the opinion that the body of our Lord was stolen by his disciples, ought to attempt to shew that the part of the narrative, which relates to his conduct after his resurrection, is a forgery. They ought to prove this, for the authors of the history of our Saviour's actions before his death, must have undertaken, for the support of such a fraud, a continuation of his supposed actions during the period they affirm he remained on earth after that event.

Now a continuation is given by the evangelists, St. John in particular; a short one indeed: but some continuation would be required by persons of each opinion, that it might be compared

pared with what is previously recorded of our Lord's character and conduct.

Now, from such a comparison of these facts, and from an examination of the narrative, I think we may deduce a new proof of the truth of the resurrection of our Lord.

A forgery of this kind must have been a most difficult, I think an impossible deception, if the facts had not taken place.

I was lately led by the recurrence of the season, to examine this account of our Lord's intercourse with his disciples after his resurrection; and, in humble imitation of the author of the *Horæ Paulinæ*, to attempt to discover those minute and delicate circumstances, which distinguish a true narrative from a false one; and I think I have found as many as so short a relation might be expected to contain, and as many (although even one striking incident might suffice, and no one has determined the number of them necessary to constitute authenticity) as may tend to establish its credibility.

Let

Let us then suppose it to be a forgery, and if it be one, it must be of the same age or nearly with the gospels. That consistency in the character of our Saviour, before his death, and after his resurrection, could not have been preserved but by a disciple, (and I think not even by him) or by a person who had constantly attended his teaching.

The detail of the events, which happened after the resurrection is so short, that I shall not separate the two objects of my enquiry, the insertion of those particulars, which the author of a forgery would have omitted, and the manner, in which the character of Jesus is sustained after his resurrection.

I. I shall first consider the words, which our Saviour addressed to Thomas, when he appeared a second time to his disciples, when they were assembled at the same place where he had before appeared. When he observes Thomas, who was now present, he says, (not as he restrained the eagerness of Mary, with a view, perhaps, to that liberty of examination

he



he was about to allow) "Touch me not," but  
 "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my  
 "hand; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust  
 "it into my side."

It might be objected to this speech, that it  
 is only a repetition of the remarkable reply of  
 Thomas to the joyful information of the disci-  
 ples, "We have seen the Lord." But we are  
 informed that our Lord appeared the second  
 time, "after eight days." During this time it  
 may be said the disciples acquainted our Sa-  
 viour with the stubborn doubts of their com-  
 panion. Such suppositions of facts, which are  
 not mentioned, have no other limits than those  
 of the imagination of the objector. I could  
 reply with queries equally specious, and of as  
 difficult solution. But there is one great rea-  
 son why they should not inform our Saviour  
 even if they had the opportunity. Thomas,  
 who seems to have resembled Peter in his  
 disposition, expressed his scruples in the most  
 powerful terms; but in reality his doubts  
 were not stronger or more singular than their  
 own,

own, for they had mutually disbelieved the testimony of each other. "Now, when Jesus  
 "was risen early the first day of the week,  
 "he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out  
 "of whom he had cast seven devils, and she  
 "went and told them that had been with  
 "him, as they mourned and wept; and they,  
 "when they had heard that he was alive, and  
 "had been seen of her, believed not."

"After that he appeared in another form  
 "unto two of them as they walked and went  
 "into the country, and they went and told it  
 "unto the residue, neither believed they them."

The specification then of "eight days" was apparently designed to shew that Jesus had no intercourse with his disciples during that interval, and that he exhibited, in his speech to Thomas, his peculiar power of discerning the thoughts. I have not, however, contended so long for this instance of that power because it is the only one. Another of the same kind is preserved, and a very remarkable one; [Luke xxiv. 37, 38, 39.] "And as they thus

"spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of  
 "them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto  
 "you. But they were terrified and affrighted,  
 "and supposed that they had seen a spirit.  
 "And he said unto them, Why are ye trou-  
 "bled, and why do thoughts arise in your  
 "hearts? Behold my hands and my feet,  
 "that it is I myself. Handle me, and see,  
 "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see  
 "me have." This faculty of discovering the  
 secrets of the heart was acknowledged by his  
 disciples before his death to be one great proof  
 of his divine original. When they were reason-  
 ing amongst themselves respecting the mean-  
 ing of the saying, "A little while and ye shall  
 "see me; and again, a little while and ye shall  
 "not see me, because I go to the Father:" and  
 were surmising, "What is this that he saith,  
 "a little while, we cannot tell what he saith.  
 "Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to  
 "ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire  
 "amongst yourselves of that I said?" and when  
 he had explained his meaning more fully,  
 he



he said, "I came forth from the Father, and  
 " am come into the world; again I leave the  
 " world, and go to the Father." His disciples  
 said unto him, " Lo! now thou speakest plain-  
 " ly, and speakest no proverb. Now we are  
 " sure that thou knowest all things, and need-  
 " est not that any man should ask thee." " By  
 " this," by this power of knowing the heart,  
 " we know that thou camest forth from God."  
 The disciples might indeed have detected the  
 pretensions of an impostor by the want of this  
 extraordinary power. The same circumstance  
 then must have influenced their belief after  
 his resurrection as powerfully as it did before  
 his death, and have convinced them that it  
 was their Lord and their God. I omit the  
 other incident, that the same person bore in  
 his body the marks of a late crucifixion.

It is a strong presumption, I acknowledge,  
 that my interpretation of these passages is  
 wrong, because it differs from that of the able  
 and distinguished author of the Theanthropos.\*

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\* The late excellent Mr. HAWTREY.

But let us consider his remarks: "Observe  
 " well the conduct of Thomas upon this occa-  
 " sion; he saw enough to convince him of all  
 " he wanted to know: he saw the wounds, he  
 " saw that it was his crucified Master;" there-  
 fore Thomas answered and said to *him*, "My  
 " Lord and my God [p. 65.] These words, I  
 agree with Mr. HAWTREY, are [p. 66.] "in ac-  
 " knowledgment that the person to whom he  
 " addresses himself is the Son of Man, invested  
 " with all power in heaven and in earth, and  
 " they are in attestation of his divinity, and that  
 " he is the Son of God:" [p. 70.] Again our  
 Lord says to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen  
 " me thou hast believed." "The words *thou*  
 " *hast believed*, do not relate, as some have ima-  
 " gined, to a faith in the resurrection, but to  
 " a faith in the divine person of our Lord, of  
 " which, as there could not then be any sensi-  
 " ble evidence, so could it only be an object of  
 " faith." I confess that it appears to me, that  
 the testimony of the wounds on our Lord's body  
~~was designed to~~ <sup>remaining</sup> ~~produce~~ pro-  
 duce

duce some effect; because, no doubt, he who could rise again from the dead, could have risen without them. The remarkable address of Thomas may bear no relation to the *person* only of our Lord, but proves (to my conviction) the identity of his nature after his resurrection, that he still retained the nature of the Son of Man, bearing the marks of his human and unglorified condition, but at the same time shewing one of the distinguishing attributes of the Father, to whom he was going—the knowledge of the secrets of the heart. The Psalmist exclaims, “If we have forgotten the  
 “name of our God, or stretched out our hands  
 “to any strange god, shall not he search it out?  
 “for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”

And again more emphatically in the book of Samuel I. c. xvi. v. 7, “The Lord seeth not as  
 “man seeth, for man looketh on the outward  
 “appearance, but the Lord looketh on the  
 “heart.” And again conclusively in a passage of the Acts, containing a most irrefragable proof of the faith of the disciples in the  
 resurrection



resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and a most full acknowledgement of his divinity, and an appeal to this very attribute; "and they  
 "prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which know-  
 "est the hearts of all men, shew whether of  
 "these two thou hast chosen." Surely, as the words of the other passage to which I have referred, "Now we know that thou knowest  
 "all things, and needest not that any man  
 "should ask Thee," must allude to his anticipation of their wishes to interrogate him by his peculiar power of knowing the heart; so, by the plainest grammatical rules, by every dictate of common sense, the words "By this  
 "we believe that thou camest forth from God," must necessarily also allude to this power.  
 "You tell us that you came forth from the  
 "Father; we believe you, because you have  
 "his power, which no one else hath, of know-  
 "ing the thoughts of the heart."

II. When our Lord is said to have "vanished" out of the sight of those with whom he was conversing, it is not an action feigned  
 by

by the relater, as it was not peculiar to him after his resurrection. His disciples knew, that when they never suspected him of possessing the nature of a spirit, "he was thrust out of the city" by the enraged members of the synagogue, and was "led unto the brow of the hill, (whereon their city was built) that they might cast him down headlong; he passed through the midst of them, and went his way." This likewise agrees with the former actions of our Saviour.

III. Another of those "infallible proofs, by which he shewed himself alive after his passion," is this: "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye any meat. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honey-comb, and he took it, and did eat before them."

The eating publicly, to shew that there was no deception of the senses, and that the restoration to life was perfect, was doubtless a satisfactory proof even independently of others.

But

But how was it strengthened, when it was the same which he vouchsafed to afford of the reality of the resurrection of Lazarus, and of the daughter of Jairus. The appeal to the senses was also publick in the case of Lazarus. Thomas was present when that miracle was performed, and heard the sister of Lazarus declare, that by this time he was corrupting in the grave. "Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those that sat at the table with him." And when the daughter of Jairus became again "a living soul," Jesus commanded that something "might be given to her to eat." Altho' there was not the same publicity in this last miracle as in the former, yet the parents would doubtless have spread abroad the rumour of the command to give their daughter something to eat, when she did not possess the power. But instead of this, we read that "the parents were



“were astonished.” There is, however, more particularity in the account of our Saviour’s participation of food; for we are not only informed of its kind, but of its quantity and condition. It was “a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honey-comb.”

IV. The miracle, which Jesus performed after his resurrection, is analogous to one which he performed before his death, and an objector might say that one was copied from the other. The scene of the two miracles was the same lake, the ship belonged to the same person, it was a supernatural draught of fishes, and the sons of Zebedee were present.\* This last miracle must have recalled not only the former to their minds, but also the person who performed it, because it was on that occasion that the sons of Zebedee and Peter forsook all, and followed him. But the account of this last miracle is characterized by one of those great marks of authenticity. “Now, when

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\* See John, ch. xxi. and Luke, ch. γ.

"Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea." This demonstration of zeal accords with the known temper of Peter, and a forgery might have contained this incident, (although I think I urge the supposition to its greatest limits) yet we should not have learnt from it that "he girt unto him his fisher's coat, for he was naked." This is the testimony of an eye-witness only.

V. The message, which the angel, who was sitting in the sepulchre, delivered to the women, is singular and striking. After he had informed them that Jesus was risen, he adds, "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee."

A fictitious history might not have wanted this specification of Peter, if the command had come from our Saviour himself: but it is unexpected, though by no means unnecessary, in the place where it occurs. The mention of Peter is too circuitously conveyed through the angel to have been a fiction, even of the most expert

expert fabricator of falsehood. He would have thought it sufficient to have mentioned the disciples in general, if at all. That our Saviour should leave such a message with the angel, the imagination, however fertile, would never have provided.

VI. Upon Peter our Lord had promised "to build his church," as he expresses it with his own energy. The accomplishment of this promise might have been signified, as it is by the command of feeding his lambs, but it would not have been accompanied with the pathetic question, repeated like his own denial three times, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Could Peter, can we, doubt that it was his and our Lord? The warmth too with which Peter replied to the implied suspicion of his affection, is a circumstance too natural to have come from the pen of a person who was not present at the conversation.

VII. The last circumstance which I shall mention is this, that if the account of the events after the resurrection had been fictiti-



ous, the author would probably have been satisfied with repeating what had taken place before his death, and not have dared to attempt to exhibit the same consistency in the character of our Saviour in his ordinary conduct after the resurrection, much less to have taken up the plan of Providence, where it had been left at the death of Jesus, and to have supplied it by bold suppositions. The difficulty would have been two-fold, to make the character of the Son of God consistent before his death and after his resurrection, to speak in such a manner "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." This statement of the fact must force immediate conviction on the mind, that this narrative, which we have been examining, is true.

We have indeed only a few particulars concerning our Saviour's intercourse with his disciples after his resurrection. But we read "that many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book." The restriction "in the presence

“presence of his disciples” shews us that the ministry of Jesus, as far as it related to the conversion of the world, had terminated at his death. The miracle also, which he is related to have performed after his resurrection, was not in the face of a crowd of spectators, as formerly, but before his disciples only. The world was about to receive other teachers, whom he was to prepare in various ways for that great work, but particularly by affording the fullest means of conviction concerning the truth of the fact of his resurrection.

I have addressed to you these observations, not so much because I am happy and proud in our connection, as because I know that the same spirit which animates your teaching, will dispose you to receive, with greater candour than others, the attempt of any fellow-labourer to establish, in opposition to the scoffer of these days, a truth so important, and so necessary to our comfort—the foundation of all our hopes—the earnest of our own immortality.

The

The predominant wish of my heart is, that when I am entrusted with the same charge as yourself, I may, with the same zeal and pious industry, unostentatiously instruct the ignorant, confirm the strong, and guide the weak.

Your affectionate Friend,

and Brother in Christ,

T. F.